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**A BRIEF HISTORY  
OF THE BOSTON  
FLOATING HOSPITAL**

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**BOSTON, 1906**

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# The Boston Floating Hospital.

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The office of The Boston Floating Hospital is  
Room 505, 178 Devonshire Street, Boston. Tele-  
phone, Main 3359.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS.

All contributions for the hospital should be sent  
to George C. Lee, Jr., Treasurer, Lee, Higginson  
& Co., 44 State Street, Boston.

## The Boston Floating Hospital.

### What it Is.

The Boston Floating Hospital is a hospital boat for the care and treatment of sick babies and other sick children under six years of age, and the instruction of mothers in their care. It makes daily trips from Boston down the harbor during July, August, and September. It leaves City Wharf in the morning and returns there in the afternoon to land its day patients. It then goes over to Pickert's Wharf, East Boston, for the night. This makes it very accessible. The hospital treats both permanent and day patients, and incidentally serves as a day home on the water for many well children with their mothers; for it is often necessary that a mother coming with a sick child should also bring her well one with her. It was founded especially for those who could not afford to pay for its services, and it is supported entirely by charity.

### What it Does.

The most important feature of the Floating Hospital is its emergency work. During July and August nearly three times as many children under five years of age die as in any other two months of the year.\* Sickness is so common among children during these two months that there are hundreds of cases that cannot be cared for by the city hospitals. These are the cases that are treated by the Floating Hospital.

\* Boston Board of Health Report, 1893.

This hospital is unique, and has received the attention of medical men and medical journals at home and abroad.\* City hospitals in general give medical and surgical treatment. Some institutions, such as the New York Floating Hospital, give day outings to children and mothers to give them the benefit of the sea air and medical treatment. Seaside hospitals give sea air and continued medical treatment. The Boston Floating Hospital combines all of these features, and fulfils a mission at a time during the summer when some of the hospitals for infants are closed.

**Work of the Hospital.** The work of the Boston Floating Hospital may be classified as follows:—

1. THE CARE OF PATIENTS. In 1905 the total number of patients was 965, of whom 279 were in the permanent wards, and 686 were day patients. For further statistics see Annual Report for 1905.

2. THE TRAINING OF YOUNG PHYSICIANS AND NURSES BY EXPERIENCE AND STUDY. Since 1899 diplomas have been given to 113 nurses in The Boston Floating Hospital Post-graduate School, and to fourteen House Officers after two seasons of service. The course of training includes lectures and ward work, on which examinations are held.

There is excellent opportunity for the study of children's non-contagious diseases and for clinical work. The hospital record for 1905 shows 134 diseases, 64 in the permanent wards.

The Food Laboratory offers facilities for the

\* Medical Journals of Paris, Glasgow, Turin; a surgeon of Brazil and others.

study and preparation of modified milk and special foods.

3. **THE EDUCATION OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION BY SPECIAL RESEARCH.** In 1903 an investigation relative to the bacillus of dysentery (*Shiga bacillus*) under Dr. Simon Flexner, of Philadelphia, was undertaken, with satisfactory results.

4. **THE EDUCATION OF THE COMMUNITY.** The hospital is always accessible to the mother, who is allowed to go on board with her baby for day trips, and is taught how to sterilize utensils, how to prepare the special foods recommended for her child, and, as far as possible, how to care for her child at home and prevent further sickness. This is one of the most important features of the Floating Hospital.

#### **Origin and History.**

The Boston Floating Hospital owes its origin and success to the faithful and untiring efforts of the Rev. Rufus B. Tobey, its founder, and to those who were associated with him in the work from its beginning.

On Mr. Tobey's return daily from the city to his home in the suburbs during the summer of 1893, he was impressed with the crowds of children and mothers with infants in arms walking up and down the South Boston Bridge.

Investigation showed that this was a daily occurrence, extending far into the night; that this bridge and like places afforded the only relief from the heat of the houses in which these people lived; that the suffering and sickness of babies and young children from heat was great, and that their only



chance of life was in obtaining cooler atmosphere and pure air.

The New York Floating Hospital suggested the idea of a similar institution in Boston. Mr. Tobey interested some friends, contributions of money were received, and a trip was planned for the following summer.

**The First Trip.** On July 25, 1894, an experimental trip was made on a barge hired and fitted up for the occasion. A certificate signed by a physician admitted the baby and its mother. Volunteer assistance was given by physicians, nurses, and members of the King's Daughters and similar organizations.

This trip was so successful that four others were made that season.

**Second Year.** A cash balance of about \$700, received too late to be used in 1894, gave encouragement to continue the work another season, and thirteen trips were made in 1895.

**Organization.** Efforts were made to have some existing organization take over this work, but without avail. It seemed in every way desirable to continue the work, and steps were therefore taken to make the Floating Hospital a permanent institution. The work was reorganized with a board of managers, a medical staff, and two permanent nurses.

**Union with the Lend-a-Hand Society.** In order to obtain the advantages of incorporation, the hospital, in 1896, became a department of the Lend-a-Hand Society, and so remained until 1901.



### **Further Development of the Work.**

The work grew steadily, and marked improvement was made each year. The barge "Clifford" was purchased in 1897, and refitted and equipped to accommodate two hundred patients. The volunteer helpers from women's societies gave place entirely to graduate nurses.

### **Night Work.**

It was found necessary in some cases to keep a child over night in order to save its life. This led, in 1898, to establishing two wards for permanent patients with nurses, physicians, and helpers for night duty. Afterwards four wards were required for permanent patients. In 1899 apparatus was installed for cooling and drying the air in the wards, especially on sultry days. Although the temperature on the water is lower than on the land, there were days in August so sultry, even on the water, as to cause many deaths. This apparatus was constructed for the purpose of furnishing to two of the wards air of uniform temperature and of relative humidity and at the same time of giving good ventilation.

This same year an advisory staff of physicians, specialists in the various branches of medicine and surgery, were appointed. In 1900 special attention was given to the bacteriological examination of milk in the Food Laboratory with important results.

### **Incorporation.**

In 1901 the Floating Hospital withdrew from the Lend-a-Hand Society, and was incorporated on September 23 as The Boston Floating Hospital.

In 1905 the Board of Managers was enlarged, and became the Board of Trustees.

### **Need for New Boat.**

As early as 1901 the need for a new boat was felt, since the old boat was crowded in every department. In 1902, and every year since, large numbers of babies and children have been rejected for lack of room. 169 were rejected in 1905, 25 of them on one day (July 18).

The old boat, the "Clifford," was a temporary expedient, the best that could be obtained at the time. The hospital has outgrown it. Larger and better accommodations are required, and are necessary for every department. The trustees, therefore, decided to build a new boat, which will be in commission in July, 1906.

### **The New Boat.**

The new boat is 171 feet long and 44 feet beam. The hull is of steel, and the superstructure of wood. The hull is provided with seven water-tight compartments, and the boat is amply equipped with apparatus for use in case of fire.

In order that the boat may be ready in time, self-propelling machinery will not be installed until 1907, so that during this season the boat will be towed.

The boat has four decks,—the main deck, the hospital deck, the out-patients' deck, and the pilot deck. It is arranged for convenience as well as efficiency.

The hold contains space for the engines and boilers, ventilating and refrigerating apparatus, the cook's galley, a dining-room for mothers and convalescent children, and quarters for the crew.

The main deck contains the food laboratory,

clinical laboratory, executive offices, the dining-room for house officers and nurses, and one hospital ward to be used for emergencies only.

The hospital deck contains six wards and the operating room, sterilizing room, four wards for the most critical cases, one for convalescents, examination and treatment room, and one outdoor ward.

The out-patients' deck contains accommodations for day patients, nurses' rest room and kindergarten, an examination and treatment room, and quarters for the resident physicians, house officers, and visiting staff.

### **Heating.**

The boat is heated by steam, and cooled by a refrigerating apparatus.

The heating system has been planned with a view to its being extended economically in case the boat should ever be used for winter work.

### **Ventilation.**

A system of ventilation by an atmospheric plant for the indoor wards on the hospital deck has been provided,—a system specially designed for the "Clifford" and modified to suit the new boat. This system was thoroughly tested on the old boat with the best results.

The outside air is drawn in by suction through a system of filter bags, the excess of moisture is removed by precipitation on cold brine coils, and the dry air is then heated to the proper temperature by hot coils, and carried into the wards by fans. The air in these wards is changed about every five minutes without drafts, and an even temperature of from 70 to 72 degrees F. and relative humidity of 50 to 60 per cent. is maintained.

The boat is sufficiently provided with toilet facilities, including tub baths, showers, and small tubs for infants.

**Food  
Laboratory.**

The Food Laboratory prepares food for the patients and gives opportunity to nurses and doctors for study and practice.

The milk supplied to the hospital comes from a dairy farm managed under modern strictly sanitary conditions. The greatest care is taken in handling the milk both before and after it reaches the hospital. Its purity is such that it is not necessary to sterilize or pasteurize it. Frequent bacteriological tests are made for purity.

**Number of  
Patients.**

The New Hospital Boat will accommodate one hundred permanent patients and one hundred and fifty day patients,—nearly half as many more than were accommodated on the old boat.

**Cost.**

The cost of this new boat, fully equipped, will be about \$100,000, of which \$40,000 has already been subscribed (May, 1906).

Contributions for the new boat, for current expenses and for permanent endowment, are asked for.

**Memorial Beds.**

The sum of \$250 allows the donor the privilege of naming a bed on the new boat. The bed is provided with a tablet. This is not an endowment, as the money is used for the current expenses of the hospital.

**Named Days  
and Named  
Nights.**

The sum of \$150 allows the donor the privilege of naming a single day as a memorial, and \$100 the privilege of naming a night.

**Admission  
Cards.**

Admission cards may be obtained from physicians of either school, from district nurses, from agents of the Associated Charities, from the various dispensaries and hospitals, or at the office of The Boston Floating Hospital. Except in cases of emergency, the admission cards must be signed by the physician attending the child. Children with contagious diseases are not admitted.







